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STATE FOR NEA/MAG

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: "MOVEMENT OF ALL DEMOCRATS": ASSOCIATION
DETAILS/STRATEGY EMERGE

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas T. Riley for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Movement of All Democrats (MTD), the political association formed by palace intimate Fouad Ali El-Himma is the main topic for political discussions in Morocco. Despite formal denials, members say that MTD is preparing to form a party and participate in the 2009 municipal elections. MTD members from a broad political and intellectual spectrum see the association as a catalyst for democratic reform and a bulwark against the growing popularity of Islamists in Morocco. The association will likely support this party through recruiting, a growing network of non-governmental organizations, and a new media apparatus. The MTD will face the challenge of gaining grassroots support from a population disillusioned with party politics and suspicions the MTD, sometimes dubbed the "Movement of All Opportunists," is simply a reflection of El-Himma's close connection to the Palace. End Comment.

Philosophy and Goals

¶2. (C) MTD founding member Khadija Rouissi told us in early July that the MTD's overall goal is to improve democracy and social equity by strengthening democratic institutions, including the government and political parties, as well as social institutions. The MTD aspires to act as a catalyst for political reform through national dialogue built upon three thematic pillars: modernity, democracy and solidarity. Its two guiding documents are the final report of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) and the "Morocco at 50 Report on Planning and Development."

¶3. (C) In working to implement the IER's ambitious recommendations, the MTD will fight systemic high-level corruption and Salafism, introduce constitutional reforms, and increase government oversight. The MTD also stands for strengthening the government, parliament, and parties, while decreasing "the need" for royal interference in these areas. Rouissi also pointed to justice sector reform as a sine qua non for any national reform effort. The MTD's work is not intended to replicate French democracy but to create a democratic system based on Moroccan historical and "cultural norms," according to Rouissi.

¶4. (C) When asked about criticisms regarding the domination of the MTD by Fouad El-Himma and it being the "voice of the Palace," she countered that the MTD is made up of many high quality individuals. She said that she does not feel overshadowed by El-Himma, describing his leadership style as flexible, inclusive, and serious. Although having a high-profile figure in the MTD was admittedly a potential distraction, El-Himma also represented someone who could "get things done."

Association Structure, Growth, and Membership

15. (C) According to Rouissi, the MTD is made up of an executive committee of the six founding members, of which she is one, but outside of this, the structure is fluid and developing. MTD members represent a broad range of individuals from diverse professional disciplines, geographic locations, and walks of political life. While seeking diversity, the MTD excludes Islamists, extremists, and human rights violators. The MTD is not anti-Islam but stands for a separation between church and state. The MTD is building itself from the bottom up and the outside in by creating strongly autonomous local and regional organizations that will drive the central apparatus. The center will provide principles and guidance based on consultation with regional representatives. Regional affiliates, independent groups, and NGOs can link themselves to MTD by signing onto the statement of principles, and contributing ideas and projects, explained Rouissi. The organization obtains funds mainly from the members themselves and does not take money from business (which is against Moroccan law).

Outreach to NGOs

16. (C) The MTD has established working relationships with a broad array of NGOs throughout Morocco through which the MTD hopes to address local problems, according to Rouissi. She said that even her new NGO "Beit El Hikma" (BEH or House of Wisdom) may serve as an independent philosophical idea and policy incubator for the MTD. BEH's main purpose is to

counter extremism by strengthening Morocco's traditions of tolerance and acceptance. She said that opposition to Salafists, Palestinian issues, and U.S. Middle East policy would figure prominently in its discourse.

Media Blitz

17. (C) Rumored in the press but thus far lacking in detail, the MTD is also kicking off a major media foray by launching a national newspaper, six regional newspapers, and a radio program, according to our consultations with senior parliamentary staffer Abdel Wahed Driouche (strictly protect). The six regional newspapers are being set up in areas where newspapers are already concentrated (e.g., Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier and Oujda) in order to assist with recruiting journalists and to maximize readership.

18. (C) The regional papers, which will be produced in both newsprint and online versions, will concentrate on reporting of local events, in line with the MTD's political strategy of "proximity," (i.e., addressing local concerns). A radio program will be launched at roughly the same time as the newspapers and may be followed by television in two or three years. Moving aggressively, the MTD plans to produce a newspaper "mock-up" in August, establish an editorial line in September, and start publication in October or November. Led by MTD Communications Director Salah El-Ouadie, a former Moroccan government media official and founding member of Moroccan Organization of Human Rights, the MTD is hiring numerous journalists from regional and daily papers, universities, and niche disciplines (e.g., economists, regional experts, etc.) in an operation that appears to be well financed.

Party Formation

19. (C) Rouissi and fellow MTD executive board member El-Habib Belkouch (also President of the Center of Human Rights and Democracy), confirmed that a political party will be born out of the MTD in the coming months to participate in

the 2009 municipal elections. The MTD itself will remain a political association. The MTD is busy consulting with its members to formulate a party name and platform focused on local conditions (e.g., rising food and energy prices) as part of its "proximity" theme.

¶10. (C) By forming a new political party, the MTD also hoped to force Morocco's political spectrum to consolidate around three major poles (i.e., a liberal center, led by MTD; a socialist left; and an Islamist pole), according to Rouissi and Belkouch. The MTD considers the current fragmentation of Morocco's political party spectrum to be part of the problem of Parliamentary ineffectiveness. The MTD viewed recent dialogue among leftist parties about consolidating their platforms into a common one as a positive indicator of this trend. The MTD also hopes that its political party will force other old parties, like Istiqlal and the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) to reform. Rouissi described these parties as wedded to their patronage systems, arrogant, and undemocratic, with no ability to reform without external pressure.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) The MTD is still largely based on single individual, palace intimate Fouad Ali El-Himma, which is the principal weakness with its democratic reform rhetoric. We believe that dominant reason for the creation of the MTD is palace concern about the rising popularity of Islamism, manifested politically in the PJD. It is difficult to escape the palace's history of introducing new political parties, led by royal confidants, to check what is perceived to be a potential political threat to the crown, a role filled by Istiqlalis, socialists, and communists in past eras. Although the technique has proven consistently effective at removing these threats, "palace parties" have also consistently failed to deliver promised political reforms.

¶12. (C) Comment Continued: On a purely party-machine level, the MTD's effort to create a political party has been impressive, combining interconnected recruiting, political outreach and media efforts. In an effort to counter the PJD, the MTD appears to have emulated the structure of its opponent. The PJD also was born out of a political

association (i.e., "Reform and Unification"), which recruits for the party, provides the PJD with an extensive grassroots support network, and uses its widely read newspaper, Attajdid, effectively.

¶13. (C) Comment Continued: The MTD's largest challenge in preparation for the 2009 municipal elections will be cultivating support at the large low end of society where political cynicism reigns among a generation of Moroccans who have seen the "palace party" cycle play out many times, and with little to show for it. It is at this same level that the PJD, with its established and effective community support networks, does its best work. End Comment.

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